

ALL ABOARD!

Volume 1, Issue 1

Summer 2013

Southern Railway Locomotive Bell Acquired

By Roy McClain

Since opening, the Aiken Visitor's Center and Train Museum has received a number of railroad related artifacts including our most recent acquisition - a full size locomotive bell. The bell spent most of its life mounted on the front of Southern Railway locomotive Number 1248.

As can be seen in the photographs the bell is large, weighing between 200 and 300 pounds, is three feet tall, and made of cast iron and brass. Number 1248 is a Southern Railway PS/PS-2 type locomotive, built in 1910 and scrapped in 1949. Although 1248 was utilized primarily in passenger service in Georgia, PS/PS-2 types were the most common motive power on passenger trains into and out of



Aiken. Sister locomotive Number 1240 is pictured in Aiken in 1937 (above).

After 1248 was scrapped, the bell was given to a summer camp in North Carolina where it resided until the Museum acquired it in 2012.

The bell has been mounted on a beam just over the Aiken Depot's information desk. It can be seen from both the first and second floors.

Installation was a joint effort between the City of Aiken and Stewart Builders as shown in the photograph.



Nathan Stewart & Josh Stewart install the bell from Southern Railway Locomotive No. 1248



The Southern Railway locomotive Number 1248 built in 1910

The bell has a crack on one end. One of the most frequent questions asked of the Docents is "How did the bell gets its crack?" Perhaps it was the result of an overzealous engineer or an overzealous counselor calling his campers to dinner. We just don't know.

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**Friends of the
Aiken Railroad Depot**
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Friends of the Aiken Railroad Depot Gift Shop



Mrs. Claus visits the Aiken Depot Gift Shop to shop for Santa.

By Tami Cooke

The *Friends of the Aiken Railroad Depot Gift Shop* has many Aiken and railroad themed items that make perfect gifts for every occasion. There are many choices of apparel with the railroad depot logo; sweat-shirts, long and short sleeve denim shirts, tees and polos. Coffee mugs, tea towels, note cards, bandanas, engineer hats for adults and kids, banks, whistles, a very special Aiken "conductor", artwork, an Aiken

Depot birdhouse and much more is available at the gift shop. Your purchases directly support and benefit the Aiken Railroad Depot.

Cash, check and credit cards are accepted.

GIFT SHOP HOURS

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday ~ 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday ~ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday ~ Closed

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What happened to the Railway Express Agency?

By Dudley Erb

You can Google the subject today to find some answers, but this report tells the story from the actual experience of a young employee that was there to see the beginning of the end of this great less-than-carload transportation company.

When I was hired in late January 1960 by the Agency's offices in Philadelphia, little did I know the top management had been given an ultimatum by its railroad owners to either make a go of it or close it down. I was among a very small group of new hires (mostly college graduates) that were to be "exempt" employees who were not required to have a badge number or punch a time clock. Being exempt also gave an automatic one month vacation which was awesome for a young parent.

I was assigned as a special agent at 30th and Market Streets in Philadelphia. The staff of 15 was actually the sales department in the region, which covered 5 counties, including a small portion of New Jersey. I had the smallest



area to cover with the largest number of regular express shippers. My territory included all of the old town historical sites, so whenever company visitors came to town, I was given the job to escort them to Independence Hall, the Mint, Betsy Ross' house, Elfreth's Alley, etc.

The biggest problem was that my territory consisted of mostly Jewish-owned businesses and my predecessor was a Jewish man who told them he was being laid off because of a health problem. As a young Gentile, I had a problem asking them for their package shipments to go our way.

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Railway Express Agency (continued from Page 2)

Quite often, too, I was confronted with traffic managers whose child's baggage had been lost coming back from camp or from college. "Find that stuff or pay my claim, and then we will talk about my company's outgoing traffic."

After two years of an undistinguished selling experience, I asked if I could further my transportation career in operations. Sure enough, I was assigned as an assistant manager on the midnight shift. I was the first "exempt" person on the Philadelphia District to hold a supervisory position without first having a badge number (time clock vs. salaried).

The midnight shift at the terminal had two tasks: loading trucks for daytime, and loading outbound railroad cars. Dressed in a suit and tie I was unable to lift a package or do anything a union member could do.

My secondary assignment was to watch over the "money room", where high value items were handled for security reasons. One night I entered the money room to find a card game in progress with liquor bottles on the table. Of course, I diligently noted that on my daily report. As I reported the next day, the shift manager took me aside and informed me that the money-room thing had been scratched off my report "to make things easier for everyone" including me.

I soon noticed my boss, the shift manager, (having been brought up through the ranks as a platform worker) also wore a suit but was able to lend hand to union employees, and

actually drove a "motor" to pull carts around the platform and toss packages onto the carts when needed.

I was quite impressed with the arrival of a modern package sorting device costing over \$150,000. This unit was about 40 feet wide and 100 feet long, a large

"One night I entered the money room to find a card game in progress with liquor bottles on the table."

oval of trays on a conveyor with fingers or smaller conveyors that lead to the loading docks. All packages entered at a staging area, where 3 operators would read each label, determine which truck it needed to head for, and when he pushed it on an empty tray, push a route button on his console.

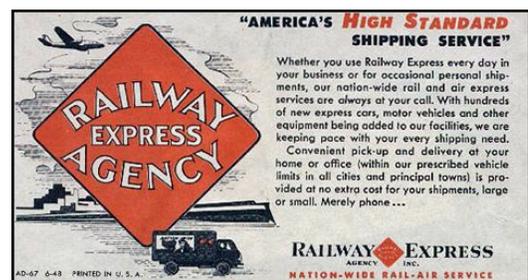
This was a well-planned engineering wonder that had the potential to help save the company's future, but because it was viewed as a labor-saving device, the packages were put on the trays a

little crooked, or the button pushed at the wrong time, leading to a package falling off the tray. With many tons of packages on the machine at a given time, traveling at about 8 miles per hour, it took almost a half revolution for the unit to come to a full stop. That one errant package could cause packages on other trays to be ripped from their own trays, causing customers' goods to be destroyed as the unit was coming to a stop.

I was surprised to be assigned the task to walk the trays to dump the broken containers out of the way, mixing all kinds of destroyed merchandise onto the floor. Claims quadrupled, and the workers were very pleased. I was disheartened to see anyone happy about such losses. Every night thereafter, at least 2 or 3 times, I was walking trays because no one wanted that job.

Early on, I heard that only one out of three workers in that terminal actually worked and the other two were hiding. As time went on, I found it to be true as I toured the facility on my nightly rounds.

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*In 1866, Wells Fargo & Co. purchased the stage and Pony Express operations. In 1914, those operations included 7 different companies. During World War I, the Federal Government directed consolidation of those companies which resulted in the nationwide organization known as the American Railway Express Agency. In 1929, the U.S. railway purchased the express business and renamed it the **Railway Express Agency, Inc.***

Our First Member Appreciation Night!

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On Thursday, March 23rd, the *Friends of the Aiken Railroad Depot* held our first Membership Appreciation Event. We had great food, great wine, great members, and a great presentation! The presentation was done by train enthusiast and board member, Don Barnes. The *Friends of the Aiken Railroad Depot* are lucky to have our very own railroad expert to call on for special nights like this. Don spoke about the ways the advent of the train progressed society, as well as how many modern day sayings were derived from the railroads.

It was a wonderful opportunity for our membership to explore the offerings of the Aiken Railroad Depot. We plan to have these events quarterly, so be on the look out for the next one!



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National Train Day Celebration at the Aiken Railroad Depot

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On May 11, 2013, the Aiken Visitors Center and Train Museum was the place to be on National Train Day. Spectacular weather and family-friendly festivities drew a wonderful crowd to the Aiken Railroad Depot. Visitors enjoyed live music, hotdogs, popcorn, and fresh cotton candy. FREE Train Rides and a chance to win a Lionel Train Set were a big hit with the kids, while everyone enjoyed the book giveaway, train-themed crafts, games, and storytelling in honor of this historic day.



Conductor Winslow reading *The Bernstein Bears "All Aboard!"*



Making train art together...



The Lionel Train Set winner is ... *The Children's Place, Inc.!*



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THE AIKEN RAILROAD DEPOT

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The beautifully restored Aiken Railroad Depot is home to the City of Aiken's Visitor Center & Railroad Museum. Capturing an important part of Aiken's history, The Railroad Depot building looks much like it did between 1899 and 1954. During the early part of the last century, this freight station was bustling, with as many as 1,000 horses per year arriving in the Fall and returning the end of Spring to New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and the New England area.

Members of *The Friends of the Aiken Railroad Depot* play an important part in preserving this important piece of Aiken's history. To learn more about ways you can support the *Aiken Railroad Depot* or become a member of *The Friends of the Aiken Railroad Depot*, please visit www.aikenrailroaddepot.org.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE AIKEN RAILROAD DEPOT

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